Ict-Based Entrepreneurship Education As A Solution To Extreme Poverty And Radicalism Among Nigerian Youths

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Abstract

This paper discusses the role which exposure to ICT-based entrepreneurship education could play in reducing Nigeria’s extreme poverty and excessive radicalism which have almost outwitted the country since the past two decades. Decision to engage in this exercise emanates from the fact that the negative effects of both activities dangerously impinge human and infrastructural development so excessively with the effect that overall national development could be crippled, while citizens languish in penury and inability to commit to national consciousness. It is the understanding of this brief paper therefore that since the Nigerian youth are often the perpetrators and unsolicited victims of both deplorable activities, there is urgent need to engage them in varieties of skills-based and ICT-related entrepreneurship programmes of education, all with the primary targets of supporting them acquire the lucrative skills they require to operate as self-reliant and economically viable Nigerians. Supported with relevant entrepreneurial skills therefore, this calibre of citizens could create and secure lucrative jobs for themselves, acquire gainful employments, become self-employed citizens, employ other unemployed Nigerians and create wealth to support themselves and family members. Effectively adapted in programmes of school education therefore, Nigeria could be on the right tracks out of poverty and extreme radicalism which seem to wind the nation’s pace of development backwards. The qualitative analytical method shall be adopted in this analysis.

Keywords: Unemployment, Poverty, Youths Radicalism, ICT-Based Education, Entrepreneurship, Poverty Reduction
Introduction

The last two decades have seen Nigeria at the dangerous brinks of national collapse and inability to grow. Within the period, the spate of criminality and excessive terrorism exacerbated by extreme poverty, unemployment and food insecurity have hit the country adversely. Poverty, hunger and inability to meet up with the healthcare needs of family members have hit the skies in several households. Among families, the financial capacity to handle the mounting challenges presented by Nigeria’s harsh economic climates has often been difficult. These have often been compounded by years of unemployment and lack of lucrative skills among the youths who constitute the bulk of the nation’s human wealth. Thus, youth unemployment has been accountable for the growing levels of criminality, poverty and food insecurity affecting Nigeria since the past two decades. Faced with such huge challenges therefore, chances of escaping the persistent crutches of poverty and extreme radicalism remains elusive and insurmountable.

Against this background therefore, there arises the need to engage the youth and other unemployed Nigerians in ICT-based (Information and Communication Technology) programmes of skills acquisitions leading to entrepreneurship development. The understanding is that armed with adequate knowledge of skills-based entrepreneurship education, this category of citizens could be shown the leeway to escape from the crutches of harsh unemployment and job hunts in Nigeria’s saturated labour markets. The implication is that affected Nigerians who have been subjected to years of unemployment, inability to acquire skills and endured years of poverty could be supported with the relevant entrepreneurial skills they require to bounce back to life and become the economic powerhouses in their homes. Understandably therefore, ability to acquire ICT-based lucrative skills could shine the lights needed to escape from poverty, disease, hunger, and food insecurity. Empowered with relevant skills therefore, hungry and poverty stricken Nigerians who could have become viable recruits into criminal gangs could be rescued and turned into better citizens (Onuoha, 2010; Osuagwu, 2020; Umeh, 2020).

There are diverse areas of entrepreneurship in which unemployed Nigerians could be engaged. The positive note is that the country is endowed with abundant capacity to equip her youth and other unemployed citizens with the relevant professional skills needed to lead the populations out of misery and inability to earn decent incomes. Remarkably, the arrival of the new millennium and the invention of the ICT infrastructures have set the pace and erected the stage for massive expansion in the varieties of ICT-based professional skills available for acquisition. The birth of the digital era has so much transformed the human capacity to acquire skills to greater heights, with the effect that willing hands could be conveniently converted to multi-talented professionals who are endowed with the technological capacities required to function effectively in various fields (Odo, 2015; Iwunna, Dimonye, Ari, Okoro, & Okeke, 2021).

Statement of the Problem
It is quite remarkable that the greatest threats facing Nigeria’s educational development in the present times include poverty, insecurity and terrorism. This is a period in time when millions of fellow countrymen and women find it difficult to fetch three meals per day, while several million others have been devastated by the activities of terrorists, kidnappers for ransom and daylight robbery gangs. Consequent upon these ugly incidents, Nigeria’s struggles towards effective national development meet severe deadlocks. Because majority of citizens are unskilled, economically un-empowered and unable to sustain themselves and family members, chances of attaining genuine nationhood seem elusive and herculean. In appreciation of these crippling scenarios therefore there arises the need for the empowerment of Nigeria’s youth and other unemployed citizens with ICT-related entrepreneurial skills. Supported with strong entrepreneurial skills in lucrative and areas of the nation’s economy, opportunities for jobs creation could influence national growth positively in several ways. Indexes of Nigeria’s unemployed figures could drop drastically. This could motivate more Nigerians to begin to think outside the box and walk towards establishing their own businesses, make money and become successful in life (Wuana, & Iyav, 2013).

Unfortunately, Nigeria’s economy has suffered severe setbacks since the beginning of the new millennium. Economic growth has been shaky and epileptic. Youth unemployment has tripled so dramatically and has retarded economic growth and national development. This, according to Onuoha (2010), has resulted to the loss of output desperately required for increased national economic growth, a situation created by the “enforced idleness of able-bodied worker”. While citing Toyo (2002), the author maintains that the poor economic situation results to a loss in aggregate demand, which usually leaves a depressing effect on the nation’s economy.

Remarkably, Nigeria is listed among global nations which have high youth unemployment ratios. Thus, a survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (2006), confirms that in 2004, for instance, the youth who possessed the primary school certificate remained at 15.8% of the figures of unemployed persons in the country. Similarly, figures of unemployed youth who possess the secondary school certificate accounted for 52.8% of unemployed Nigerians, those who possess the tertiary education certificates account for 16.5% too. The report then concludes that 52% of unemployed Nigerians in 2004 are the youth, whose age range, according to Onuoha (2010), ranged within 15-24 years.

Because of the enormity of the challenges impacted by these unemployment indexes, there emerges the need to empower the youth with ICT-related skills which could aid them become job creators and entrepreneurs. Empowered with relevant entrepreneurship skills therefore, enough economic space is created for “cultivating tomorrow’s entrepreneurs and skilled workers who are crucial to driving future economic growth and job creation” (Wuana, & Iyav, 2013).

These explain the dire need for the empowerment of the country’s youth with comprehensive ICT-based entrepreneurship education within the country’s educational establishments. This would, not only create jobs, but also empower the youth with the capacities to become job creators through the skills of invention and innovation, and in the process contribute immensely in driving poverty away from the land, as well as play pivotal roles in checkmating the
proliferation of radicalism, terrorism and kidnapping for ransom which seem to defy all efforts to bring them under control.

**Purpose of the Study**

Basically, this paper is an attempt to reliably explore the relevance of ICT-based entrepreneurship education towards ending extreme poverty and radicalism among Nigerian youths from 2000 to 2020. On the strength of the problems identified above, the authors strongly contend that in view of the current economic depressions which Nigeria is undergoing at the moment, there is great need to build in a formidable entrepreneurship education programme into the country’s educational curricula. The implication is that more Nigerians could be motivated to engage in entrepreneurial skills after leaving school, thereby saving the nation’s economy from the unfortunate embarrassments of grappling with high rising unemployment indexes yearly.

**Methodology**

The study is a qualitative one and the research is wholly library-based exploratory research. Invariably, the research methodology basically involves critical analysis of extant secondary literature resources. This paper is divided into seven sections. The first is the introduction. The second, third and fourth contain the statement of problem, purpose of the study and methodology respectively. The fifth attempts to clarify the relevant concepts and the review of related literature. The sixth part examines the findings of the study which border on the relevance of entrepreneurship education for Nigerian youths. The seventh is the conclusion and recommendations.

**Conceptual Clarifications / Literature Review**

**Entrepreneurship Education:**

The question is: What is entrepreneurship education? In answering this question, the opinions of a few authors shall guide the analysis of this subject. Thus, Osuala (2004) conceptualizes entrepreneurship education as that educational knowledge which seeks to provide basic knowledge, skills and motivations to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of business settings. This source argues that it is the exposure provided by this education that instils the competencies, and guarantee the successes that the entrepreneurs desperately needs to survive and succeed in a chosen area of business engagement.

Similarly, Akaakahol and Avaan (2013) concede entrepreneurship education as that model of education which provides learners with the knowledge, skills and motivation needed to start up a small scale business. According to the source, this education promotes innovation or rather introduces new products or services and market strategies to learners to become outstanding entrepreneurs. In which case, the primary target of this model of education is to equip learners with adequate knowledge of business skills.

Finally, Kenton and Ervin (2000) accept this concept as an educational discipline which prepares people, especially the youth to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become
entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers that contribute to the economic development sustainable emancipation of human persons and their communities. According to this source, this model of education empowers citizens with the capacities to remain disciplined, responsible and prepared to take risks for a business operation with the expectation of making a profit.

Against these backgrounds therefore, it is quite glaring that entrepreneurship education imparts learners with skills and business-based competencies. Guided by these knowledge banks, learners become empowered with the abilities to turn themselves into self-employed persons, employers of labour and creators of wealth for themselves and families, which could lead millions of Nigerians out of poverty, ensure food security and eliminate the sad incidents of undue inducements to enrol into criminal gangs and terror groups.

**Poverty as the Root of Radicalism:**

The concept of poverty has in the recent time attracted extensive debates around the world. These debates were informed by the desire to accord this concept the appropriate definition it deserves. This is based on the perception that the concept is relative and could be better understood when it is directed to a specific context. Thus, in the world of today, Onuoha (2010) claims that “it is common to hear of absolute poverty, income poverty, relative poverty, and material poverty”. However, Onuoha, in Onuoha (2007) situates this concept as “a situation of deprivation in which an individual or group of individuals in a society lack the requisite resources, opportunities or means of livelihood to lead a long, healthy, and satisfactory life being unable to provide for their basic life requirements such as water, food, shelter, clothing, sanitation and a minimum level of medication”. This author claims further that “as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, poverty manifests in various forms, including hunger and malnutrition, ill-health, lack of (or limited) access to education and other basic services, increased morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness or inadequate housing, unsafe living conditions, and social discrimination and exclusions”. It concludes that the ugly phenomenon is characterized by the absence of opportunities to participate in decision-making and in civil and socio-cultural affairs.

From the above, it is obvious that these dangerous trends pose daily challenges to the Nigerian youth. These man-made challenges impact their daily lives and struggles to wriggle out of poverty and lack of opportunities for life. Confronted with these predicaments, the average Nigerian youth is unable to secure a job, provide for family members, take responsibility for his future, participate in active decisions-making, contribute to community development, acquire the basic skills needed for employment, access proper medical services, rent decent accommodation and gain access to decent living conditions. As a member of the community, the youth are often denied the opportunities of contributing opinions on issues which bother on their welfare. They are often wrongfully isolated and marginalized because of their poor income earning capacities (Nwobashi, & Itumo, 2016).

Putting these developments into perspective, it is quite eminent that poverty and inability to take full responsibility for one’s basic needs constitutes the major driving force behind youth engagement in radicalism and other criminal activities in Nigeria. Driven by the crutches of
poverty and lack of assistance from the government and relevant agencies, and having endured several years of excessive hardship and abject food insecurity exposes the youth succumb to the pressures of gang membership. Having been assured of lucrative incomes and other financial remunerations attached to candidate’s membership, affected Nigerian youth seems left with no more options than to pledge his loyalty. Onuoha (2016) confirms that afterwards, the affected candidates could then be utilized as viable hands in carrying out tasks necessary for the survival or operations of a group or organization in furtherance of its objectives. Against this background, this author concludes that recruitment is fundamental to any group’s existence or survival. In which case, recruitment of unemployed youth leads the way, while deployment to attack specific soft targets then follows.

Findings on the Relevance of Entrepreneurship Education

The analysis of the findings on the relevance of entrepreneurship education shall be made under the following sub-headings: Exposure to Skills Acquisition; Engagement in Entrepreneurship Education; Education for Self-reliance; and Education for National Development.

Exposure to Skills Acquisition:

The invention of the ICT industry has without doubt transformed man’s access to varieties of professional skills. Constituted of countless numbers of skills which learners could easily tap into, the industry has successfully flooded the globe with assorted technology-based skills which fetch lucrative incomes, elevate peoples’ income earning capacities, place them on the right positions to employ themselves and others, as well as equip them with the technological capacities to fight unemployment, poverty and lack of skills in Nigeria.

Effectively entrenched into the nation’s educational curricula, Nigerian youths could be supported to earn decent incomes, escape poverty, ensure food security, become job creators and employers of labour, avoid the temptations of engaging in criminal activities, as well as acquire the capacity to contribute to national development. Thus, in skills areas such as computer networking, hardware maintenance services, graphic designs, video recording, ICT marketing, software engineering, internet browsing services, computer literacy and video editing jobs, etc., the Nigerian youths could find themselves highly relevant as contributors to national growth (Akaakohol, & Avaan, 2013; Odo, 2015).

Engagement in Entrepreneurship Education:

Towards lifting the Nigerian youth away from poverty and extreme radicalism too, there is urgent need to incorporate entrepreneurship education into the nation’s educational curricula. Included as part of the educational curricula, young learners shall begin early enough to embrace comprehensive knowledge of the roads that lead to life of entrepreneurship, as well as walk the tight ropes that drive to the paradise of wealth creation. Acquainted with these fundamental skills, Nigeria’s youths would encounter no troubles in engaging in any skills-based professions which dirty the hands, instead of walking the streets of Nigeria in search of inexistent jobs which are often reserved for applicants who are connected with the persons in authority at the seat of government (Osuagwu, 2020).
Thus, instead of wasting several years filing applications for jobs here and there, unemployed youth could create lucrative jobs for themselves in the agricultural sector, entertainment industry, hospitality economy, ICT-based establishments, construction industry, marketing sectors, transportation services areas and agro-based sectors of the national economy. With little support from the government through the banking sectors, millions of Nigerian youth could be lifted out of poverty within the shortest possible timeframes, thereby disconnecting them from worshipping at the altars of radicalism and criminality (Nwachukwu, 2019).

**Education for Self-reliance:**

Again, exposing the Nigerian youth to ICT-based entrepreneurship education could enable them acquire the relevant skills needed to become self-reliant adult citizens of the country. As independent and self-employed persons, these citizens are able to support themselves, employ themselves and several others, create wealth for themselves and others, as well as rescue fellow countrymen and women from the crutches of poverty and engagement into crime-based groups. Having received the relevant educational capacities needed to think creatively, engage in innovative research activities, and possess the capacities embark on walk ahead of others matters of wealth creation, this calibre of citizens are prepared to take relevant business risks without fear of failure. Guided with the businessmen’s mind sets of leading the way while others follow, affected Nigerian youth rather engage their services in small and medium size entrepreneurship which could go a long way in creating job opportunities for themselves and the teeming populations of unemployed youths (Akaakohol, & Avaan, 2013; Nwachukwu, 2019).

**Education for National Development:**

Finally, equipping the Nigerian youth with the technology-driven and ICT-based capacities to become entrepreneurial could go a long way in impacting their thinking patterns as Nigerians, affect their eagerness to contribute to nation building, influence their preparedness to sacrifice themselves for the greater good of the nation, as well as enhance their abilities to think more positively about their fatherland. This is quite crucial because poverty is a curse and an assault on the dignity of the human person. Supported with the relevant educational and technology-based skills to emerge as an entrepreneur therefore, the Nigerian youth could rather engage his time and talents by participating in activities which rather launder the good image of the country, instead of partaking in activities which dent her reputation in the eyes of the international community.

As a good citizen, such an employed entrepreneur-based youth would be constantly conscious of his activities and ensure that they never undermine the economic growth of the nation. In his daily activities, the affected youth would always ensure that his conducts, both in private and in public, do not contravene the laws of the country or those of their overseas host nations. In which case, the empowered Nigerian youth could never engage in any forms of economic sabotage, Advance Fee Fraud (popularly known as (419), “Yahoo-Yahoo” (the trending form of computer-based economic fraud), cultism, human trafficking, drug abuse, terrorism, religious intolerance, and sexual violence, among others. As a patriotic citizen, such a Nigerian youth would always be very conscious of his activities and conducts, bearing in mind that the
nation’s good image was always at stake in the eyes of the global community. Empowered with lucrative entrepreneurial skills therefore, the Nigerian youth would have no reason to be drawn into any criminal activities which ridicule the country’s image locally and overseas. Instead, he or she could go the extra miles in ensuring food security, national cohesiveness, unity of the nation, and dutifully engage in activities which erect bridges of unity across the ethno-linguistic nations of Nigeria, which is estimated at about 490 (Iwunna, Ndukwu, Ujah, Ari, & Alison, 2022).

**Conclusion**

Nigeria is no doubt a country that has been at war with insurgents since the beginning of the millennium. Confronted with ugly complications of this merciless war, millions of precious lives have been lost. Millions of citizens have been thrown into abject poverty. Severe food insecurity seems to overpower citizens’ purchasing powers. Millions of hectares of farmlands have been abandoned owing to the menacing attacks of hoodlums and faceless terrorists operating in the country, most especially in the northern frontiers. Citizens have been displaced from their ancestral homelands with impunity and forced to migrate away from their communities as IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons). Among Nigerians, these have created excessive food inflations and sky-rocketed the costs of basic food commodities all over the country. In the midst of these gory developments, the youth bear a huge chunk of the brunt. With these developments in focus, there is therefore the need to embark on the project of engaging the youth of this in ICT-based entrepreneurship skills through the auspices of curricula-based programme of school education.

**Recommendation**

For Nigeria to emerge as a powerhouse in the areas of ICT-based entrepreneurship educational development, it is fundamental that schools and educational establishments should be equipped with relevant ICT facilities. Secondly, the education sector should be better funded to enable teachers and learners perform better. Wider opportunities for training should be created Nigerian youths who wish to train as small and medium scale entrepreneurs.

**References**


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